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A LETTER
TO THE

LORDS and GENTLEMEN who have concerted
the form of a law for that establishment.

By a FREEHOLDER.

EDINBURGH:

Printed for GAVIN HAMILTON and JOHN BALFOUR.

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EDINBURGH:
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The Question relating to a SCOTS MILITIA considered.

My LORDS, and GENTLEMEN,

I Address this discourse to you, because it is to your public spirit, and attention to national measures, that we owe the present hopes of seeing a militia soon established in Scotland. I live at a distance, and shall be glad, in offering you the thanks and praise you deserve, to be anticipated by an abler pen. Your patriotism cannot fail to have roused congenial spirits. But though I have only received general information of your proceedings, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of publicly congratulating you, on the acquisition you have made of the esteem and gratitude of every man who is a lover of liberty and his country.

I am sensible, that, in the following pages, I cannot add a single idea to your ample knowledge of the subject, nor one spark to your zeal for a measure, so necessary for the safety and honour of your country. By means of your honourable names, I only hope to become less obscure, and make the voice of a re-

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mote though independent freeholder reach the ears of his brethren, who are now full of expectation from your well-judged and public-spirited measures.

Of all the wonders that have been performed by the present administration, the establishment of a national militia, though not the most shining, is far the greatest, whether we consider the obstacles that were to be removed, or the consequences that must follow. When the battles of Minden, Quebec, and Belleisle shall only serve to adorn the page of the historian, the militia will continue, to give liberty, strength, and security to Great Britain; and the reign of George II. will thence derive a glory, that in future times will appear superior to the greatest increase of dominion, or of trade.

Improvements in policy, it is true, seldom arise but from pressing occasions; and the zeal of the wisest patriots is found unable to produce remarkable changes, except when it acts in relief of some real complaint. Happy is that nation where the ministers are capable of taking advantage of such necessities to form lasting and national institutions, instead of patching up the state with temporary and selfish expedients.

The internal defect which was so plainly pointed out by our losses and alarms in the beginning of the present war, and which gave
occasion

occasion to the change of policy I now speak of, was not unknown to the friends of liberty in the former age. Ever since the happy revolution, men have not been awanting, who have shown us the insufficiency, and warned us of the danger, of trusting entirely to standing armies. The truly British spirit of our soldiers, no less than the moderation of our princes, has hitherto secured us from that danger; bitter expence has more than once taught us the insufficiency of such a force.

It is wise to learn even from an enemy. The French, taught by our example, ever since the days of the great Colbert, have been extending their commerce. They saw that their natural strength and military power alone could not maintain their equality with Britain; and therefore they endeavoured to derive an artificial strength from trading colonies and a powerful marine. Their example, their menaces, and the sense of our own defenceless condition when threatened at home, so lately experienced, have taught us in our turn to cultivate every part of our natural strength, as well as our artificial; that is, to mix the military spirit with our civil and commercial policy. I call the *natural* strength of a nation, the extent and fertility of its land, the numbers, the industry, and the bravery of its people. And I call the *artificial*, foreign trade, paper credit, and a navy. For however ne-

cessary the latter may be to the grandeur and dominion of a state, they are only like the ornaments of a building, which may be spared or destroyed, and yet the fabric remain safe and secure: But the former are like the essential parts of an edifice, which if you remove, certain ruin must ensue.

When we engaged in the present war, (a war truly national, in which independence, not dominion is our object), we had been accustomed to see our fleets victorious on every sea, and carrying the terror of our name to the most distant regions of the globe. Our wealth had formerly secured us powerful allies, and put mighty armies in motion to fight our battles on the continent of Europe. But no sooner had we engaged in this war, singly against our powerful enemy, than he discovered and we felt our weakness. The whole world had seen five thousand undisciplined militia from the most remote parts of the kingdom, defeat the regular forces that opposed them, carry terror and dismay within an hundred miles of the capital, and bring the government and constitution of Britain into the most imminent danger. The alarm of that fatal year, and the distraction of our councils, will stain our annals for ages to come. This pitiful insurrection, which, with the least attention to internal policy, could have been quelled in a week, brought our army from
Flanders

Flanders in the utmost hurry and confusion; and, what is still more shameful, obliged us to call into this island 12,000 of the most despicable foreign mercenaries, whilst every generous spirit felt equal disdain of the foe, and of the auxiliaries, and deplored to see the body of a free people, the best, the natural strength of every kingdom, the disposers of wealth and of power, reduced to so feeble and contemptible a state, without the means and without the capacity of self-defence.

The rebellion was quelled at last; but not till it had opened the eyes of every thinking man, and shown him our bosom bare and defenceless. The fear and the expence, if not the dishonour of that year, might have been a lesson to the dullest statesman. But the season was not yet come, when the wisdom of our patriots could act with advantage. We resolved still to trust entirely to the troops who are in the King's pay; instead of arming the people, we encouraged schemes of policy for enfeebling them more; and that a warlike spirit might remain in no corner of the island, in place of reclaiming the Highlanders, and availing ourselves of their valour, which was always in our power, we wholly disarmed them.

In the mean time our politic and watchful enemy failed not to take advantage of our infatuation. While he aimed in reality at our distant colonies,

colonies, to increase his own commerce and naval force, and to lessen ours, he seemed to meditate a mortal blow at our bosom. 'Tis uncertain whether or not he really intended at that time to invade us; but he threatened loudly, he made formidable preparations, and the effect was the same upon this nation as if he had been serious; for we were alarmed, we were frightened, beyond what the posterity of those who have established a militia, will be able to believe. Then it was that our navy, that boasted bulwark of Britain, was thought unequal to the defence of that part of our coast, which lay opposite to that of the enemy. The rest of the kingdom was abandoned, and all our troops were collected round the capital, to ward off the mortal stroke. Then it was that the parliament itself, confounded at the near approach of danger, prayed his Majesty to send for some thousands of foreign troops, to save from slavery and ruin ten millions of free Britons. O! nation of women! to suffer again so much shame and dishonour! But weaker than women are a people abandoned to despair. And what could a disarmed and enervated people do on such an occasion? They judged from the fear and perplexity of their leaders, and believed that the fate of this temple of liberty, this happy seat of commerce and the arts, this mighty empire of the sea, depended on the decision
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of one single battle. The history of states and kingdoms has proved that every thing but public virtue and natural strength afford but a precarious support, and resemble a machine, where if one movement be hurt, the whole is disordered; but that a great and free people, trained to arms, like a human body, may receive many wounds, without being wholly destroyed; or rather like the fabulous Hydra, will grow from defeat. Our fears then were as just, as the conduct of the French was politic upon that memorable occasion.

But let us reflect upon the consequences. Our fears of an invasion made us leave our distant settlements and colonies in a defenceless situation; neither ships nor troops enough could be spared from more important service; the French gained their aim, our fleet in the Mediterranean was unequal to the relief of Minorca, and a few battalions of regulars was still a less adequate force to cover our frontiers in America; both of course fell into the hands of our enemies; while Europe stood in amazement to see the haughty queen of the ocean neither able to protect her colonies, nor to defend her seat of empire.

But, amidst our losses and alarms, our free constitution, it would seem, still preserved that secret energy which has often drawn medicine from poison, and turned calamitous events to its own advantage. For the disasters of that
shameful

shameful year, awaked the nation that had been laid to sleep so long in the lap of luxury, and heaven directed the voice of the people to raise a man to power, who was born to restore a falling state.

And yet the violent opposition the militia met with, when the nation was so circumstanced, will appear incredible in a future age. From that incredibility the noble patriots who first schemed, proposed, and carried it into execution, will lose half the praise due to their persevering magnanimity. But they have gained their end. The irresistible principle of that salutary law has at length prevailed, both over secret artifice, and avowed resistance. Opposition itself has not a little contributed to make the militia respectable. There are now 18,000 who have been embodied for some months, and called out of their respective counties. Every one who has seen them do justice to their merit; their most violent enemies affect to be fully convinced. Officers and private men have learned subordination and discipline to a great degree of perfection; in rank and fortune, which are pledges for their fidelity to their country, they are no doubt superior to those of whom the armies of Europe are composed; and in point of discipline, they are allowed to have attained all that regiments possess who have not been in actual service.

Thank

* Thank Heaven! and the patriot spirit of England, that there is no need to look back to ancient times, nor abroad among foreign nations, for authorities in favour of a militia; since it is confessed by all, that the southern part of our own island, within the space of a single year, has furnished unquestionable proof, that a free nation, while engaged in commerce far beyond all the ideas of antiquity, and sunk in luxury that seemed to forebode a falling empire, has been able to rouse itself on the approach of danger, to revive the military spirit, and to form an establishment that equally secures it against domestic tyranny or foreign invasion. How will ages to come revere the memory of those noble patriots, who, with that persevering wisdom which always overcomes, have procured us the greatest of human blessings!

When one considers the great advantages of a well-regulated militia, it becomes matter of wonder, that Great Britain, that has excelled all other nations, ancient or modern, in other kinds of policy, should have been without one so long. The views of speculative men, the friends of liberty who have formerly written and spoke upon this subject, seem to have been directed to the securing the constitutional freedom of their country. They had seen almost all other nations enslaved by mercenary forces, and the fear of such an event excited their patriot

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spirit. In pursuit of this object, their writings abound in proofs of the fatal effects of standing armies, and of the promptitude with which they have always become tools, for the establishment of despotism and arbitrary sway. It must be owned, that those great men had reason as well as facts upon their side. It is impossible to find an instance of a prince who became absolute without a standing army, and no sound argument can be brought against intrusting the people in free governments with arms. "There is no limitation of monarchy," says the renowned Fletcher of Salton, "that
 " is any real security to the liberties of the
 " people, but that which puts the sword in
 " their own hand. The power of granting
 " and refusing money, though vested in the
 " subject, is not sufficient where a standing
 " army is kept up in time of peace; for he
 " that is armed is always master of the purse
 " of him that is unarmed. The possession of
 " arms," continues that great patriot, "is
 " the distinction of a freeman from a slave.
 " He who has nothing, and belongs to an-
 " other, must be defended by him, and needs
 " no arms: but he who thinks he is his own
 " master, and has any thing he may call his
 " own, ought to have arms to defend him-
 " self, and what he possesses, or else he lives
 " precariously and at discretion." True distinction! which will obtain while there are
 freemen

freemen and slaves. To be actually in bonds is not to be a slave, for that has happened to men of the noblest minds. But to be of a base, a dastardly and servile spirit, to want the desire and capacity of self-defence, that is to be a slave ; for these vile qualities bring a man under the will and power of every one who thinks it worth while to command him.

But, in spite of the clearness and certainty of those principles, the freest nation on earth had almost forgotten them, and in a few ages more might perhaps have acknowledged an order of men for their masters, whom they were so willing to trust for their defence. Experience indeed, at the glorious revolution, hath taught us that liberty is dear to all orders of men, and that we have but little reason to fear that the favour of an ambitious prince will, before an æra of general corruption, be able to purchase a surrender of the rights of freemen, even from our soldiers. The wisdom and justice of our sovereigns have been also no less a security to Britain, than the extensive property and liberal minds of her military officers. The fear of the pretender, the great armies of France, and other continental powers, have been strongly urged as unanswerable reasons for keeping up a numerous standing army. And our eager pursuit of trade, together with the softness that luxury induces, and the contempt of military honours which wealth be-

gets, have been our motives for yielding to these reasons.

Necessity at length brought to pass what neither philosophy nor eloquence were able to achieve. Our standing army was unequal to the uses for which it was designed; a more certain internal defence was found necessary; and thus the pretender and the armies of France have procured us a respectable militia. We have at length had recourse to the ancient principles of our constitution; and those noble patriots who thought of security against invasion only in the second place, if they thought of it at all, have had their generous aim accomplished, through the fear of that danger, which they perhaps looked upon as a pretence or a bugbear. So little foresight has the sagacity of the wisest statesmen, and so much sway has necessity and expedience, in the government of nations.

Pardon me, my Lords, and Gentlemen, for having dwelt so long on the causes and occasions of this constitutional law. I shall next consider the advantages of a militia in general, and the chief objections that have been made against it; and then proceed to inquire into the reasons for extending or not extending this law to our own country of North Britain.

I have already hinted that there is a certain spirit or force in every free government, that dictates salutary laws in cases of necessity, and,
like

like the vigorous constitution of a human body, draws good out of evil, corrects what is noxious, and assimilates it to itself. It may further be observed, that Providence has so united what is wise and just, to what is easy and beneficial, that men have little more to do, than to pursue those measures which are most obvious and honest. In the present case, we had only to look back to the original principles of the constitution, to find a militia; and thence it appears to be the most obvious, and natural, and just expedient for our defence. It must also be allowed to be the most certain and frugal method that could be devised.

Who does not admit that Britain is stronger, by all the number the militia consists of, since they were arrayed? When once the militia is complete in England, is it not evident that we shall be able to act offensively against the enemy with an additional force equal to their number, which is 32,000 men? I could almost venture to say, that our return to principles congenial to our constitution, has given a firmness and vigour to our councils unknown before; and that from the date of the first execution of the militia law, commences the æra of the success and glory of our arms. But though our force is thence increased, and our counsels invigorated already, it is in future wars, if this shall terminate when I wish it, that we are to expect the full benefit of
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of this national institution. At the end of the seven years 90,000 men must have been trained to arms in England alone, and in process of time, all the sensible men of the kingdom. And then having established the best defence any state is capable of, *viz.* the united strength of every individual, let the French, or let all Europe, invade us if they will.

If the war shall last another campaign, Britain must exert her utmost force. Besides foreigners in our pay, we shall probably have no less than 130,000 native soldiers; an army that it is impossible for us long to support, and which at the end of the war, in half-pay officers alone, will leave a very heavy burden on our revenues. But it were easy to demonstrate that in a future war, by means of the militia, which loads us with no half-pay, and costs us little expence except when actually employed, we shall be able to exert an equal force against our enemies with half that number of soldiers.

Thus it appears, that a militia is the most certain and most frugal method of defence. Let us consider what effect it would have on our army. I would not be thought to mean any reflection on the regular forces of Great Britain, when I affirm, that they will be improved by the establishment of a militia; nor do I chuse to bring any late events in proof of my assertion. I regard and honour the army; and I congratulate my country on the glories

glories of late so justly acquired by her native troops; for till war cease upon the earth, a reputation in arms cannot fail to be a capital advantage to any nation. By arguing for a militia as the firmest internal defence, it is not my design to invalidate the reasons for a standing army. The dignity of our Sovereign, and the grandeur of the state, require a lasting establishment of military force. To mix often in the wars of Europe with a body of British auxiliaries, would preserve our military reputation, and be the means of enuring our officers to service and the practice of war. The army would thereby become an example and a model to our less experienced, not less capable militia.

The establishment of a militia, on the other hand, would be a singular advantage to the standing army, as it would remove the people's ground of distrust in them, and recover to them their confidence and esteem. The manners of a nation have an irresistible influence over the mind; and as few will have the spirit to be brave where cowardice is not dishonourable, so none will dare to be cowards, where the whole men of their city or country are known to be brave. Besides, as emulation is allowed to be one of the greatest spurs to noble achievements; by establishing a separate order of military men we kindle that passion in the breasts of our soldiers. Every one thinks
himself

himself accountable to his relations and friends for the whole of his conduct ; and let the public judge of him as they will, he will find some consolation in the esteem of his own family. But by raising the military spirit, and rendering the friends and relations of every soldier capable to judge of his conduct, a jury is established in every family of the kingdom, where even women and children will be severer judges, than the public itself.

I shall now consider the objections against this national institution. There are only two of any importance. The *first* is drawn from the consideration of our trade and manufactures ; the *second*, from an apprehension of the inefficacy of a militia.

It is said, That a military spirit is contrary to the interest of a commercial nation ; and that the militia will interrupt the industry of our people who are employed in trade and manufacture. The short answer to this objection, is, That perhaps it might have weight, if what is necessary to our safety, could be contrary to our interest ; and if we could preserve our trade and manufactures, without employing any hands in their defence. But we shall consider it more in detail. It is unquestionably true, that when the militia are embodied, and march out of their respective counties, labour loses as many hands as they consist of ; and if the militia were designed only for parade,
none

none but madmen could approve of the institution. But when the end of the institution is the security of our lives and liberties, and of that very trade and manufacture, what reasonable man can object to it for a moment? Especially if it be considered, that labour loses less by it, than by a standing army. Soldiers in time of peace are wholly lost to their country. The militia follow their occupations, except on the few days in a year, when they meet in divisions to learn their exercise: and even in time of war, as the militia are raised equally from every place in proportion to its numbers, when they march from home, manufactures must feel it less. A large recruit of the army, which falls chiefly on the towns, carries off the manufacturers, and is subject to no rules, but the caprice, interest, or good fortune of the officers. If it be added, that, after this root of internal strength is firmly planted, a much smaller number of soldiers will be needed, on the sudden emergence of a war; it will appear that trade and manufactures are gainers by the institution.

We hope likewise, for the honour of trade and manufacture, that they will not be found inconsistent with a spirit of liberty, and the capacity of self-defence. They do not appear to be so in the natural world. In the most industrious republic that nature knows, the republic of the bees, every citizen is always in arms; and, among

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that warlike people, to be cowardly, and to be lazy, are synonymous terms : for the drones, who carry no sting, are expelled as useless to society.

But will the private men of the militia, it is asked, return to their labour again, after being embodied, and doing their duty as guards or garrisons for a year or two ? In answer to this question, I shall ask another : Will the 70 or 80,000 men who must be discharged from the army at the peace, will they, after six or seven hard campaigns, return to their labour again ? No doubt both must return to their labour, or enter into foreign service, or starve. But the militia have this advantage above the army, that they are inrolled with the certain prospect of being dismissed at the end of three years ; and therefore they can seldom lose sight of the occupation to which they have been bred. Besides, they return home with their officers on their heads, who are gentlemen of fortune in their own country, who may have probably gained their affection and esteem, whom they will be unwilling to disoblige by idleness or profligacy, and who will encourage and protect them to the utmost of their power.

Another objection against the militia, is, That they can never be of any use, because the art of fighting cannot be learned unless a man makes it his sole business and profession. This objection takes its rise from the idea commonly
annexed

annexed to the word *militia*, which of late has fallen into contempt, and brings to one's mind the birthday-parade of the trained bands of Edinburgh. The objection is supported also by the practice of modern times, which has made the military a separate profession. But there was no occasion for a new law to provide us with an ineffective militia; the old statutes were sufficient for that purpose. All the essential parts of discipline can be acquired in a very short time; and the regulations in the late militia-law, if supported by the spirit of the gentlemen in each county, are sufficiently calculated for that purpose. Let us then call the militia now to be established by another name; let it be *an army of the people*, and no ideas of inefficacy or cowardice will be annexed to it. They are to be armed, trained, and clothed in the same manner with regular troops, and the same subordination is to take place amongst them, though not to be enforced by military law, except when they march from home. In time of peace indeed, and always till they are called out by their King for the defence of their country, they are to live in their own houses, and work at their respective trades, except on their stated days of exercise; at the end of three years they are to be dismissed: They are to have no pay but either on their field-days, or when they march out of their respective counties, upon actual invasion or rebellion,

bellion, with consent of parliament : they will generally consist of sober and virtuous men, who have both substance and reputation to lose : and their officers are to be gentlemen of the highest rank and greatest property in the country. Unless then it can be said, that idleness forms the bodies, and dependence the minds of men, better than labour and independence ; and that a little pay can excite the indigent and ignoble to an higher pitch of honour, than that with which principles and affection can inspire a superior order of men, when they fight in defence of their fortunes, their families, their religion and liberty ; hired soldiers in point of valour cannot excel the militia, nor the standing army, *the army of the people.*

But will any man fight, it is asked, who can hire another to fight for him ? I answer, None who are capable of putting so base a question : for all men of worth and principles know, that fortitude and courage are the guardians, not only of property, but of all the virtues ; and yet, as the question is suggested by a strong idea of personal safety, that very idea revolved again in the mind, one would think, might dictate another article of self-examination ; that is, How do I know that the man who fights to-day in my defence, for a small part of my money, may not to-morrow take

take it into his head to fight *me* if I won't give him the whole?

It is needless to bring old examples from the armies of Rome, or from those of our own country of Britain; and it is equally needless to quote the present armies of Switzerland, or those of the great King of Prussia, whose native soldiers in time of peace are permitted to live at home, and follow their business for nine or ten months of the year; since England at this moment furnishes indubitable proof, that, in a very few months, the spirit of a few noblemen and gentlemen, under the inspection of a magnanimous administration, has been able to restore the military character to its honours again, to revive the warlike spirit, and to form such a popular army, as the most prejudiced officers by profession acknowledge to be equal to our regular forces. It is childish to say, that, in spite of their appearance, they would fail in time of real danger: for that is to say, that neither the maxims of common sense, nor the rules of the military art, are good foundations of judgment. I remember a time, when it was allowed, that even an undisciplined militia could fight; that was in the year 1745. Strange! that a disciplined militia for us should be good for nothing, and an undisciplined one against us be so very formidable. O! but the militia of the year 1745 were Highlanders! The time was when e-
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very man in the kingdom was as good as a Highlander ; and such a time will come again, if we are not wanting to ourselves.

I should be very sorry if any thing I have said should seem to state an opposition between the militia and the army. I think both are necessary ; the one for our internal defence, and the other for foreign wars, and the support of our power and dominion. Without a militia we cannot be secure ; without an army, in the present state of Europe, we cannot be great. A few eminent officers of the army have been zealous promoters of the militia : It was weak in any of them to discover the least jealousy. Whatever strengthens the whole society, must be for the happiness, security, and honour of individuals.

Thus I have endeavoured to trace out the causes and ends of this national institution, to point out the advantages that may arise from it, and to obviate the chief objections that have been made against it. And why was not this constitutional establishment extended at first to Scotland ? What good reason can be given for delaying so long to let us feel, in this important article, the benefit of the union ? What had we done to forfeit our rights as Britons even for a single hour ? To make answers to these questions leads me to the last branch of my subject, which I cannot enter upon without anxiety for the event in dependence,
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and indignation for what is past. The time has been when the hirelings of corruption were ready to brand every man with the imputation of folly, if not disaffection, who had courage to mention a militia, as a rational measure of defence. But the general system, which those arts of affected zeal were intended to flatter, is now changed, and the persons who used them are, I hope, now as despicable from their impotence, as they were always for their want of capacity or candour.

I have been informed, that the illustrious person who first moved for a militia in the house of Commons, in the conclusion of his speech, made an apology for his not proposing to extend the bill to Scotland; and expressed his hopes, that some of the gentlemen who were skilled in the laws and customs of that part of the united kingdom, would soon move the house for leave to bring in a bill, that should be accommodated to the state of that country. At that particular time, it is said to have been in the thoughts of some of our representatives, to move for such a bill; but the English patrons of the militia finding they were to meet with a violent opposition, begged it might be dropt at that time, lest it should give a handle to their opposers. But, to the shame of our own members of p——t, two years have been suffered to elapse, and none of them have ever attempted to obtain for their countrymen

trymen the highest privilege of Britons ; the only certain mark of distinction, by which freemen are known from slaves.

Is it that the ancient Scottish spirit is quite extinguished ? or is it that the Jacobites had truth on their side, when they upbraided us with being a province, and a conquered kingdom ? No. The genius of the Scotch never shone with greater lustre than now : In war and in letters we have acquired our share of glory, and our generous fellow-subjects of England meet us half-way in every step we take towards the full completion of the union. Happy should we be, if there were no bar in the way to prevent the immediate extension of every constitutional law in this part of the kingdom ! Thrice happy ! if, possessing every privilege of Britons, we knew the value of freedom, the greatest of human blessings, and felt that quiet sense of liberty which animates our countrymen beyond the Tweed.

The inhabitants of Scotland have so lately come to share in the policy of that wise and happy people with whom they are united, that the national spirit is hardly yet diffused among the commons. We are accustomed to put implicit trust in our superiors : to them we respectfully leave the care of all the measures of government, and few possess that inquisitive temper, or elevation of thought which freedom inspires. I am glad to make this apology for my countrymen of Scotland, who,
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when every county and every borough in England, on a late occasion, called loudly for arms as their only security, remained silent and spiritless, like the effeminate inhabitants of a conquered province; the more shame to those whose rank and power, and the trust reposed in them, required them to watch over the welfare of their country, that they took no step to secure to us the most important right of freemen and of Britons! Are we then a province and a conquered kingdom? No. But what avails it that we are free and independent, while we create to ourselves racks and bow-strings in the fear of offending, and wear chains and fetters in servility of mind?

Let us suppose, that the treaty of union had contained in it such an exception as I complain of: suppose, in the 4th article, which secures to all the subjects of the united kingdom a communication of all the rights, privileges, and advantages, which do, or may belong to the subjects of either kingdom, that an exception had been made of the privilege of arms for our own defence; and let us consider how such a clause would have been received in the parliament of Scotland. It is not impossible but men might have been found, at that time, capable of glossing such a national affront into a favour, and of paying their court by yielding up the honour of their country. Might they not have said,
 “ That the Scotch had been too long addicted

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“ to arms, to the neglect of all the arts of
 “ peace : That they were much beholden to
 “ the generous English who had undertaken
 “ to protect them : That their navy was the
 “ best defence against foreign invasions, and
 “ their militia the best security against sudden
 “ insurrections of the Highlanders : That we
 “ were happy in being freed from the trouble
 “ and expence of defending ourselves : That,
 “ safe and secure under the care of such faith-
 “ ful guardians, our lazy and idle commons
 “ would at length apply to trade and manu-
 “ factures ; and that our nobility and gentry,
 “ instead of wasting their fortunes and their
 “ blood in quest of the bubble honour, would
 “ live in peace and pleasure at home, beget
 “ sons and daughters, and accumulate wealth
 “ for their children ? ”

In what a different tone may we suppose
 the noble patriots of those times would have
 spoken ? How would indignation and disdain
 have kindled the spirit of the gallant Fletcher
 on such an occasion ?

“ My Lord Chancellor,” (might he not
 have said), “ if I may call by that name the
 “ first officer of a now degraded kingdom ! I
 “ have often told you in this place, that the
 “ possession of arms is the only distinction of
 “ freemen from slaves : and I have as often
 “ called upon you to arm the people, as the
 “ only security for our independence. Had
 “ the

“ the parliament of Scotland agreed to my pro-
 “ posal, we had not suffered the shame and
 “ dishonour of this day. By arms, and by arms
 “ alone, our ancestors sustained the reputation
 “ and power of this kingdom ; and then did
 “ they properly bear in their ensigns the
 “ motto, That none should provoke them un-
 “ punished. Without arms that motto may
 “ be reversed, and all may not only provoke,
 “ but trample upon us with safety. In ferti-
 “ lity of soil, in numbers of people, in in-
 “ dustry and wealth, we are infinitely surpas-
 “ sed by the English.—It is by arms alone
 “ that we can preserve to ourselves a name
 “ among nations. To offer us a commu-
 “ nication of every privilege with the excep-
 “ tion of arms, is to set before us all the dain-
 “ ties of the earth, and then to tie up our
 “ hands that we may not taste them. If we
 “ once give up our arms, there are no terms
 “ so hard that we must not accept of ; but
 “ while we yet have arms, and the power to
 “ use them, to agree to this article, is to make
 “ ourselves a jest and a proverb to the world.
 “ I move then, and it is the last motion I
 “ shall ever make if it is not agreed to, That
 “ the treaty be instantly broke off, and that
 “ all the commissioners who signed this in-
 “ famous article, be stripped of their ho-
 “ nours, and declared traitors to their coun-
 “ try.”

Such undoubtedly would have been the sentiments of Fletcher upon the supposition I have made. The present times indeed are different from those he lived in: the manners and sentiments of men since that period are greatly changed. But no softness of manners, nor feebleness of sentiment, can dispose men to brook the disgrace of such an exception. Let us try it by a single instance. Suppose Yorkshire had been excepted, or even only omitted in the militia-law, what a storm of rage and resentment would have fallen upon the ministers who had presumed to offer the exception? Is there one of all their thirty members, if he had been a tame spectator of such an affront, that could have ever hoped to have represented any part of that county again? Even Middlesex itself, the very centre of degenerate manners, must have felt the shock of such an indignity through the double coat of torpor that wealth and luxury has wrapt around her.

Who then can say, that the Scotch are a people proud and impatient of injury or scorn, beyond any other in Europe, when they have waited for two years with the utmost tranquillity, till every possible excuse or pretence has become stale? And who can now tax them with want of trust and confidence in their superiors, when their patience is well nigh degenerated

generated into a reproach, and their silence may imply a backwardness to vindicate their own honour, or to bear a share in supporting the dignity of the British crown?

This shire, of which I am a member, had the honour to be the first that called for arms. Thanks to a venerable judge, who joins the boldness of Cæsar to the firmness and integrity of Cato! The clergy, to do them justice, had done their part, they had attested the loyalty of the people. After the example of this shire, several others took the disarmed state of Scotland under consideration; the spirit rose, the flame spread from shire to shire; and then you, my Lords, and Gentlemen, as the representatives of almost every part of Scotland, gave form and substance to the earnest wishes of a whole people. You have acted with honour; you have managed, I doubt not, with wisdom; you have deserved, and you have obtained the gratitude and praise of your country.

And here I cannot omit to take notice of one piece of neglect which the freeholders of Scotland, with all their zeal, have been guilty of upon this occasion; that is, the not instructing their members upon an affair of so much consequence as the militia-bill: An affair by far the most interesting and important to North Britain, that has ever been laid before the British parliament. For, with the most hearty approbation of the union, and its salutary

tary effects, I do maintain, that if the militia-bill, now brought into parliament, does not pass, it had been good for Scotland, that there had been no union. But this neglect may yet be made up for, if the gentlemen freeholders will lose no time in calling meetings of their respective shires, and sending up vigorous instructions to their members, on a point which decides the fate of Scotland.

I would have this measure instantly followed, not because I am under any apprehension that the bill can possibly miscarry in parliament, but because I would have every sort of excuse or pretence put out of the power of our own m—b—rs, and leave them no room to pretend, that this is not a measure earnestly wished for, or impatiently expected by their country. They will now have an opportunity of wiping off, by their zeal and activity, the reproach to which their long silence, and our ignorance of the cause of it, has justly exposed them. The time of distinguishing those who have deserved well of the public, or of marking them with infamy who have betrayed the rights of their country, is now fast approaching; and the freeholders and burgeses of Scotland are not insensible, that the seasons of their power are only periodical, and that it is but once in seven years, that they can reward public spirit, or punish corruption.

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And here I cannot but testify my surprise, that the freeholders of Scotland, men for the most part of independent fortunes and good education, should show themselves so tame and manageable as they have done upon many occasions. When once indeed they are fully roused upon national points, I believe there is no body of men in Great Britain that are capable of showing a more unconquerable integrity: But it must be owned, that, in the exercise of their own inherent power, they have for the most part been indolent and inattentive in a shameful degree. And the consequence has been, that our r——t——ves have on too many occasions betrayed the rights and honour of their country; nay, the nation has been thought of a base and servile spirit, on account of a few who have carried to p——t the dispositions of a needy or sordid mind, instead of the liberal spirit of a British commoner.

I have indeed been often puzzled to account for the frigidity and insignificance of my brethren the freeholders. They are not very numerous. They live in friendship with one another. They are generally men of liberal minds and easy fortunes, and neither desire nor expect any favours from a court or a minister; or had they any favours to ask for their sons or nephews, surely the very worst suitors they could employ are those dependent men, whose sole end in p——t, is to obtain posts and pensions for themselves.

themselves. Whence then arises that difference they show to court-dependents? Public-spirited and honourable men have an equal title with them to ask a proportionable number of offices, civil or military, for their friends of their own shires or boroughs; and it is certain, that they will both ask and obtain them, unless some base compliance is demanded as the price.

But tho' I am puzzled to account for the usual indifference of the electors of Scotland, I am at no loss to foresee what a national spirit will animate their conduct at the next general election. In ancient and uncorrupted Rome, the candidates for the magistracy, at elections, displayed the laurels they had won, and the wounds they had received fighting in their country's cause, as the best title they could plead for being raised to power and honour. And if the electors of North Britain shall put no mark of disgrace on those who shall dare to be cold or neutral in the question, whether or not their country shall be put in a state of defence, and in possession of the privileges of freemen? from thenceforth I shall renounce the name of Scotchman, as equivalent to that of slave.

I hope, I am not too sanguine, when I believe, that whatever be the conduct of some of our own members, this application cannot possibly fail of success. The friends and patrons of the militia in England, who have wondered at the tameness with which we
have

have suffered what they must think an indignity, and who began to doubt our zeal for liberty, will receive our proposals with a hearty welcome. The former opposers of that measure, in justice to the present sentiments of respect with which the success of the militia has inspired them, will certainly give us their assistance. An administration warm in the prosecution of this glorious war, and intent on the happy conclusion of it, cannot fail to second a proposal that will extend its ability to pursue the favourite object. And the wise and equitable legislature of Great Britain, must have weighty reasons indeed, before they can refuse to put us in possession of a privilege that we claim as Britons.

What Scottish heart but must feel emotions of joy, on the certain prospect of being treated with equal respect and confidence with the other inhabitants of Britain? Who, till now, could have looked back on the danger and disgrace from which we so lately escaped, without feeling resentment and disdain of the state in which we were left, and the most anxious fears of greater distress and dishonour in the approaching summer?

Men of as little sagacity and foresight as of principles and honour, formerly said, that as the French could not seriously intend to invade us; and as a militia would necessarily involve us in trouble and expence, it was far

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more eligible for us to remain without one. But the good fortune and vigilance of Captain Thurot, which led him past the British fleet into the north sea, and who, for ought we know, still waits an opportunity of making a descent upon our coast, opened at once the eyes of every one who was willing to see.

An administration less capable of imaginary fears, than any one which Britain ever saw, thought it prudent to draw the small military force allotted us, round our capital; which left many hundred miles of our coasts, friths, and bays, wholly naked, and exposed to the depredations of the enemy. Had the French made a successful descent in the south of England, our little army must have been instantly withdrawn; and all Scotland left to the mercy of M. Thurot, till such time as the invaders of the south had been driven out of the island; that is to say, that 1,200,000 people without arms, discipline, or leaders, must have submitted to 1200 in arms, and laid their lives and fortunes at their feet. Scotland needs the internal defence of a militia even more than England; because when both are in danger, the fleet and the army are necessarily employed in defence of the latter, the seat of wealth and of empire.

What single day was there all last summer, in which the towns of Ayr, and Irvine, or even Port-Glasgow, the port and warehouse
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of the rich city of Glasgow, might not have been insulted and subdued by a privateer of small force? And how many other towns in Scotland are exposed to equal hazard, without the power of making the least resistance? This is no spectre of danger raised by a timorous fancy. Every body was convinced of the reality of it, till Admiral Hawke defeated the French fleet. But the same danger may return again: for though such conquests as those I mention, would not much avail the King of France, they are no inconsiderable objects to the master of a French privateer. And though the British government would feel itself very little the weaker for the disasters of private men, yet the smallest towns being intitled to her protection as well as the greatest, such insults would expose her to the contempt of foreign powers much beyond the real loss, and to domestic disquiet equal to the heaviest blow.

What avail the bravery of our fellow-citizens, and the glory they have acquired in the present war, if, while they fight in distant regions, to add to the fame of the Scottish courage, their country, filled with men as gallant, but naked and untrained, be insulted, plundered, and ruined, by a handful of desperadoes, whom, if they had arms in their hands, they would despise and chasten? Did not the heart of every Scotchman burn with shame

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and indignation, when he beheld a people inferior to none in Europe for military glory; trembling at the approach of Thurot's pitiful armament, and waiting in a state of helpless dejection, till they should feel where the blow would fall? To whom will posterity impute this disgrace, the greatest which ever befel our country?—Not to the people; Scotchmen were never unwilling to take arms in their own defence; nor to any backwardness in our superiors to trust a brave and loyal people. Would to God, I could say with truth, that the nobility and gentry of Scotland had more early discovered that attention to the honour and security of their country, and to their own importance, which became them.

The success of our arms during the present war, has, no doubt, been great and glorious; but as adversity soon throws us into despair, prosperity as soon elates us into presumption. The commerce of France is destroyed, her colonies are subdued, and her navy is ruined; but these are all but members of her artificial strength, which they may suffer to be maimed or lopped off, and yet remain a great and a powerful kingdom. The want of genius or *integrity* in the governors may have occasioned a temporary declension, or luxury and corrupt manners may have really impaired the vigour of the state. But we should beware of
 imagining

imagining that France is irrecoverably gone, or that a nation can make but few or feeble efforts only, where every gentleman is an officer, and where they actually march 400,000 men into the field. As she has not listened to proposals of peace, she certainly intends to push the next campaign with the utmost vigour; and it is not impossible that we may be exposed, in North Britain, next summer, to equal or to greater danger than that with which we were so lately alarmed. Thurot has not yet returned to the ports of France; and as the plan of the ensuing campaign has made it necessary to call away from Scotland the two regiments of dragoons, who could have scoured the coast on which the enemy appeared, much better than foot are able to do, we shall be left in a state still more defenceless and deplorable than before. One advantage, it is said, we possess indeed, that there are two battalions of the gallant Yorkshire militia at present near the borders of Scotland, who will probably be sent thither upon any sudden emergency, and who will not grudge to defend us, till such time as our own militia are arrayed.

By that constitutional establishment all such dangers will be avoided for the future: for though the numbers of the militia should be small in proportion to the extent of our coasts, yet being dispersed over all, no part will be perfectly guardless; by means of the rotation, the numbers

numbers of trained men will be nearly doubled on the fourth year; in a few years more all the men able to bear arms will have been trained: In the mean time a military spirit will revive amongst us: our gentlemen will become officers: and on the approach of danger, volunteers, with which this country always abounded, will find able leaders as well as order and discipline, in the battalions of their respective shires; So that in a few years hence the regiment of this shire or county, which may probably consist of some hundreds, might upon, an appearance of real danger, in a few days be increased to 2000, perhaps in a few days more to double that number; for when once the people are trained to arms, and catch the warlike spirit, their strength can only be computed by the list of those that are able to bear arms.

Let every Scotsman recollect the terror and disgrace of the year 1745, and let him congratulate his country on the certain assurance of never beholding such a scene any more. In the days of old, when Scotland subsisted by its national spirit, such an insurrection of the Higlanders could not have penetrated on this side of the Tay; for at that time the inhabitants of the mountains were the least warlike of the Scots: but, to the grief and indignation of a disarmed people, a few thousands of the clans over-ran the country, and the friends of liberty, and of
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the government, incurred the same imputation of disaffection with the rebels, because they had it not in their power to resist them : and to this day, perhaps, the opinion of our disloyalty had prevailed, if the same desperate band had not marched through England to within an hundred miles of the capital, without meeting with resistance. I will venture to affirm, that from the 21st of September, when the rebels beat the troops under Gen. Cope at Preston-pans, to the 17th of January, when they defeated Hawley at Falkirk, there was time enough to have armed and trained as many men of the shire of Ayr alone, from whence not a single man joined the pretender, as would have driven the rebels to their mountains for shelter ; but at that time it was thought more proper to intrust the Dutch or the Hessians, than the Scots, with the defence of Scotland. His Majesty's most wise and generous councils have reclaimed the long deluded Highlanders to loyalty, by confidence and rewards ; and their bravery has in a great measure atoned for the shame and distress they and their fathers have brought upon their country. Two battalions of sensible men or militia are already appointed for the defence of the West and the North ; and shall the low country of Scotland, the great body of the people, the Presbyterians, who yield to none of his Majesty's subjects in their love of liberty and zeal for the government, shall

shall they be the only part of the united nations who are not to be intrusted with arms?

Scotland, it must be owned, has always bred a race of fawning miscreants, who have built their own fortunes on the discredit of their country; vile whisperers, who take possession of the ears of the great; and having neither honour nor abilities, make their way to preferment, by fomenting the prejudices of men in power. Men of this character, equally servile and insolent, cowardly, and fierce, having often marred the fortunes of private persons, by the odious and false imputation of Jacobitism, are capable of obstructing an establishment for the safety and honour of their country, by secret insinuations of general dissatisfaction. If such men had truth on their side, the friends of the government, it might be thought, would range under them; for in the divisions of a country, zeal burns in proportion to the opposition it meets with. But if they are factious, and yet have no party; if they have power, and yet are not courted; if they have rank, and yet have no influence; if they have fortune, and yet have no friends, the conclusion to be drawn is both certain and obvious.

It is proper to warn such parricides as these, who would stab their mother to the heart, of the just resentment of all her faithful sons. Having already experienced the scorn and neglect

lect of all men of liberal minds, let them forecast in their thoughts, whether or not they will be able to bear the strong antipathy and hate of a whole injured nation. In fact, the disaffection of which Scotland has been accused, has chiefly existed in the violence of parties, who have alternately imputed it to each other, in order to depress their adversaries. But the great body of the people have always been zealous for liberty, and the illustrious family now on the throne. At all times it would have been safe to have intrusted this country with arms, because the disloyal have ever borne a small proportion to the loyal. But as the Highlanders, ever prompt to rise in arms, are now out of the question; as the confidence, for which great minds are remarkable, has been successfully applied to win their attachment and fidelity; we can boldly set the low country of Scotland in competition with any part of Great Britain, and bid all men defiance to point out any province, division, or county of England, in which there is more loyalty, or less disaffection, in proportion to the numbers of people.

It is high time for me now to bring this long letter to a conclusion. But, before I take leave, I must call on you, my Lords, and Gentlemen, and upon all the nobility and gentry of Scotland, to consider, that when you have got the militia-bill passed into a law, you have performed but one half of your duty.

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The execution of it still remains, and that will require both attention and spirit. Your love of your country will, no doubt, inspire you with zeal and activity in her service ; and, I hope, it will not check your ardour, to be told, that, in raising the minds of your countrymen, you will yourselves rise to significance and honour. Pardon the expression, my Lords ! your particular situation admits of improvement, though your birth seems to intitle you at once to every dignity. The offices of Lords Lieutenants, or Colonels, can add nothing to your honours or rank ; but they may give you new weight and consideration in the view of your country. Represented only in one house of the legislature, excluded wholly from the other, and placed above the learned professions, no road to distinction remains for you, but that of arms. And where can the Peers of Scotland appear with so much dignity and independence as at the head of the national militia, instituted for the preservation of liberty and laws, as well as for defence against foreign invasions ?

It is in your power, and in yours alone, my Lords, and Gentlemen, to make the militia in Scotland soon as respectable as that of any other part of Great Britain ; and the continuance of the war, though in other respects much to be regretted, is happily favourable for such a design. Many of the nobility and
gentry

gentry of our sister-country have set you the example; they have restored their own order to its honours again, and prevented the decline of a nation which has been sometime threatened with the consequences of luxury and mistaken ideas. Let it not be said, that you only rival their follies, but fall behind in a love of liberty and independence. The commons of Scotland, by nature a bold and hardy race, inspired by your example, and encouraged by your protection, will soon recover that manly spirit which becomes a free people, and members of the British community. To them your countenance is an honour; your smiles are rewards; these you can bestow upon all. Superior merit will deserve more substantial favours. Industry itself, it is hoped, may be improved by this new institution: for whatever brings the people under the immediate care and inspection of their superiors, puts them in a situation the most favourable for virtue and good morals. I am,

My LORDS, and GENTLEMEN,

Your most grateful

and obedient servant,

Ayrshire, Jan.
1760.

A FREEHOLDER.

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